



Muhammad Al-Saed

King Abdulaziz

The leader of the liberation battle against the Ottoman occupier

The Ottomans were keen to stay in the center of the Arabian Peninsula where they established Turkish garrisons in the Najdi towns, and supported them with men and weapons for many reasons, the most important of which were:

First: Najd continued to resist the Ottoman occupation and did not surrender since 1818, after the collapse of Diriyah and until the departure of King Abdulaziz in 1902 to restore the kingdom of his forefathers, and whenever the opportunity arose, the people gathered around their Imams from Al Saud.

Second: The Turks were keen to stay close to the Saudi capital - Diriyah and Riyadh - as they were gathering centers for Saudis to prepare the liberation battles against them.

Third: Building advanced bases for the occupier, The Ottoman Empire, through which it manages its operations against the Saudis, spying on them and weakening them.

Fourth: The Ottoman occupier's lack of confidence in his local tools, which did not take the Ottomans side except for money or power, and could not achieve realistic achievements without the Turkish repressive force.

Fifth: A confrontation base against the Saudis for fear of their liberation, not only Najd, but also the liberation of Medina, which is very close to Al-Qassim and the second most important Holy city after Mecca.

The Ottoman occupier was keen to maintain his military influence in an intermediate area between Diriyah and Riyadh on the one hand, and the Hijaz on the other hand, for fear of the return of the holy cities to their Saudi protector. It was the Two Holy Mosques that gave the Ottoman occupier his false legitimacy over the Islamic world.

Accordingly, Al-Qassim was one of the important provinces in which the Ottoman Empire consolidated its occupation and intensified its Turkish garrisons making them on permanent alert.

In 1904, when Astana shook again, King Abdulaziz had just begun the liberation battles from Riyadh to the surrounding cities and towns to regain the possession of his forefathers from Al Saud. The news began to spread quickly in Najd and the neighboring provinces until it reached Al-Qassim, with its advanced Ottoman bases and garrisons, to shake Astana again for fear of a new third Saudi state that would restore its country and its citizens would support it, thus posing a threat to the already shaky Ottoman position, which does not have any people's support in the Arabian Peninsula nor in the Islamic world.

The Ottoman Empire quickly provided its administrative ruler in the north of Najd with a large number of regular forces, who usually consist of Turkish regular soldiers and mercenaries, most of whom are from Levant and Iraq working in the Ottoman army. They were provided with modern weapons and cannons, in addition to provisions, camels and horses.

The number of Ottoman soldiers who were sent was about one thousand five hundred soldiers. Historical sources indicate that the Ottoman administrative ruler confiscated the camels of the Al-Qilat that were roaming the country for trade between Iraq, the Levant, Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula; where he loaded their backs with a large portion of food, supplies and weapons that arrived quickly from the Ottoman province of Iraq on his way to Al-Qassim to confront the Saudi army led by King Abdulaziz, or at least expel it from Al-Qassim. He reached an area near Al-Bukairyah, forming a base for the war against the Saudis.

The cunning of the king and the arrogance of the Ottomans:

On the other hand, King Abdulaziz had reached the middle of Al-Qassim, where the Ottoman forces and their followers were gathering in Najd. With his cunning, political and military genius, the king knew that this battle was crucial and decisive in the relationship with the Ottoman Sultanate and its leadership of armies against any Saudi movement, especially as it was the first direct confrontation with them since his return from Kuwait and his restoration of the kingdom of his forefathers. He announced the mobilization and addressed the Najdi people and the tribes loyal to their country, religion and the Imams of Al Saud for the fateful battle that had been determined to be in the military areas in Al-Bukairyah. The forces loyal to King Abdulaziz amounted to several thousand strong warriors, and he set out with them from Buraidah towards Al-Bukairyah to face his opponents, and that was in June 1904 AD.

King Abdulaziz's military Plan:

King Abdulaziz divided his army into two divisions to distract the opponent and disperse their forces. The first division was under his command and included the people of Al-Arid and south of Al-Qassim, and it was devoted to meeting the masses of isolated fighters loyal to the Ottoman army and Ibn Rasheed who worked for them in Najd. The second division included fighters from the people of Al-Qassim and those who followed them from the Mutair tribes, who were assigned to fight the regular Ottoman army.

The battle began between the two parties, and the Ottomans excelled at the beginning of the battle, taking advantage of the firepower of their cannons, especially as they concentrated their power against the division led by King Abdulaziz because the people gathered around him. This caused him human losses and exhausted his forces, in addition to personally being exposed to shrapnel that led to wounds in his left hand, forcing the king to retreat tactically towards the town of Al-Mithnab.

At the same time, the second division, led by the people of Al-Qassim, continued its fight against the regular soldiers fighting for the Ottomans, achieving superiority over them. This led to the capture of a number of soldiers and some cannons, and they returned to Al-Bukairyah at night. Despite this, Ibn Rasheed's forces remained cohesive and steadfast.

The battle was still going on and the losses on both sides were great. About 900 men were martyred from the forces of King Abdulaziz, including four from Al Saud. In return, about 1,000 soldiers from the Turkish army were killed, including four senior officers.

On the second day of the battle, King Abdulaziz and his followers continued to pursue the Ottomans and stationed in Al-Qassim then reached Unayzah. There, the people of the Arabian Peninsula flocked to him and supported him again to lead their liberation from the invading Ottomans. His new forces numbered twelve thousand in several days. That happened in a short time and it was a huge number according to the standards of those days.

The remnants of the Ottomans and their allies were trying to gather the rest of their forces and take a rest after those fierce battles. Those dispersed forces marched to several towns, including Riyadh Al-Khabra. There, the people refused to declare obedience, so the Ottoman army commanders ordered cutting of palm trees and the town was bombarded with cannons. It seems that this re-positioning was the beginning of the final battle that would enable King Abdulaziz to take control over the entire Najd.

The king (the Imam) returned to Al-Bukairyah to take control over it, but Ibn Rasheed sent a company that collided with the Saudi cavalry and was defeated. Imam Abdulaziz entered Al-Bukairyah and seized the Ottoman garrison there. He also seized the weapons and cannons that the Ottomans stored there.

Al-Shanana battle:

After that, the Ottoman forces withdrew to Al-Shanana, making a camp there. On the other hand, King Abdulaziz's forces were stationed in Al-Rass. Historical sources describe the Battle of Al-Bukairyah as a mission on the way to liberating Al-Qassim, but it was not decisive. King Abdulaziz bin Saud lost a lot of his soldiers and equipment, but with his experience and good leadership, he was able to overcome this deficiency and gather about twelve thousand fighters within ten days.

King Abdul Aziz insisted on continuity and confrontation, a policy and cunning that accompanied him throughout the history of his unification of the country. In this decisive battle, the king continued to fight his enemies for a period of two months until they became weak with shortage of supplies. The fight subsided only at the times of the simple maneuvers that took place between them without a decisive fight. As a result, the Ottoman warriors became tired and weak, supplies and camels decreased, and the desert fighters dispersed, leaving the ottomans only with their regular soldiers.

The leaders of the Ottoman army and their allies decided to leave for the Ibn Aqeel Palace to fortify there, as it was their last resort. Before they attacked the town and the palace in the morning, King Abdulaziz's scouts had informed him, and this is in fact one of the important tools of war, which the shrewd king employed to restore his country and defeat his enemies. In the morning, the Ottomans were surprised that the king had preceded them inside with the cooperation of the people. Thus, the Ottoman army directed the fire of their cannons to the palace. King Abdulaziz's army appeared and a fight broke out that is considered the strongest of its kind throughout the history of Al-Qassim confrontations. The fight ended with the defeat of the regular Turkish forces, where they fled, leaving behind many spoils of ammunition, weapons and money. Ibn Saud's forces kept collecting them for ten days, including the Ottoman gold chests that they sent to be used for bribery and fighting King Abdulaziz.

The features of the third Saudi state began to appear and take shape with its multiple provinces. After Al-Arid, here is Al-Qassim uniting under the banner of King Abdulaziz. The secret of King Abdulaziz's victory was patience, perseverance, exhausting the opponent with maneuvers, and convincing the Ottomans and their allies that the Saudis' army could not do more than short and quick maneuvers, then surprising them that they were fiercer and more steadfast, despite the lack of military capabilities.

References:

- King Abdulaziz's famous battles to unify the country - Abdullah Al Salih Al-Othaimeen.

- Expedition to Najd 1918 - 1917, Harry St. John Philby.